



MS TEACHER'S DANCE GROUP . . . A group of Mana Houskova's pupils rehearsing for a number in a Christmas Pantomime, which was presented at Malaya Cove School Auditorium. Tallest girl is the dance instructor's daughter, Elise Aehle II.

'Secret' of Peninsula Civic Leader Revealed

Only a few close friends know the secret in the life of "Maestro Elyse" Aehle, director of the South Bay-Torrance Symphony Orchestra, a real chairman of the county-wide Symphony League's youth project and president of the Pacific Bowl Assn.

Everyone says that she is generous to devote so much of her time and energy to the development of musical enjoyment, talent and appreciation in the South Bay area. It is not strange that she should do so. Music has been Elyse Aehle's life since she held her first violin at the age of nine.

BUT WHAT was it that brought Elyse Aehle to settle



MS PATIENT DANCING TEACHER . . . Mana Houskova Aehle, talented dancer stricken with multiple sclerosis in her early twenties, continued to teach dancing even from her wheelchair. Sister-in-law of the South Bay's "Maestro Elyse" Mana helped originate now famous May Festivals and Christmas Pantomimes. She died in 1958.

here in 1945 and buy the big, roomy home in Palos Verdes? And why, every fall, does this brilliant and busy woman take on an additional load of volunteer work as community chairman of the MS March for the Palos Verdes Peninsula?

The answer to both questions is one which lies very close to Maestro Elyse's heart. It goes back many years and thousands of miles — to Chechoslovakia in the late 1920's.

Elyse Aehle, sensational young American concert violinist, with plaudits from European and American tours while still in her teens, was selected as one of the world's greatest masters of the violin. She became concert-meister with the Smetana Symphony in Pisek.

AT THE same time, Mana (pronounced Many) Houskova, a talented young dancer also in her late teens, British-born of French and Czech parentage, returned with her ailing father to his native Pisek where he wanted to spend his last days.

Blonde Elyse and brunette Mana met and became fast friends. When Mana's father died, she decided to remain in Pisek, and the two girls spent two exciting years together there. They became like twin sisters, and when it was time for Elyse to return to her native St. Louis, Mana came with her.

There Mana met Elyse's brother Charles — and before long the two young women became actual sisters-in-law.

A MISSOURI gentleman of the old school, Charles Aehle did not want his wife to work, so Mana curtailed her dancing activities to a few private pupils. She took great pride in Elyse, who became one of the first women in the musical world to serve as regular conductor of a civic symphony, in Alton, Illinois. The whole family celebrated when Mana's and Charles' baby arrived, a little girl, christened Elise Aehle II.

Then tragedy struck. When baby 'Lise' was almost two year old, dancer Mana suddenly developed a loss of equilibrium and double vision. Fortunately there was a fine neurologist in St. Louis, who made the correct diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, a disease not widely known at that time. Since then MS has not necessarily become more prevalent, but more readily recognized.

IT IS A progressively disabling disease of the central nervous system, about which a great deal has been learned since the founding of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society in 1945, but whose cause and cure are still being sought today by medical science.

Characteristically, in Mana's case, the first symptoms soon disappeared — only to return with unexpected suddenness. When she was out walking, an exercise which Mana enjoyed next to dancing, she would suddenly start swaying on her feet. As she would stumbling try to regain her balance, other pedestrians would shy away from her, thinking that she was drunk. When she asked for help, they scurried away even faster. Disconcerted as she was by these episodes, Mana's sense of humor invariably came to the rescue.

IT COULD not rescue her physically, however, from the inevitable course of multiple sclerosis. Her hands also became affected, as well as her eyes. Her physician recommended a ward, dry climate, such as Southern California.

The Aehles are a family of decision and action, and Charles soon found a position in the Peninsula area, which appealed to them all for its beauty as well as its climate. After disposing of her 14-room studio in St. Louis, Elyse followed with Mana and the baby. "I never went into music to make money," said Elyse Aehle, "but fortunately I was able to help out in this crisis."

WITH THE aid of a good real estate agent, she found and purchased the roomy three-story house which at that time stood almost alone on Via Montemar.

Other houses nestle around it now, but it seems much more lonely to Maestro Elyse today than it did when it was full of people for her to love and take care of.

THE HOME was sufficiently large and conveniently arranged to accommodate not only Elyse and Charles, Mana and young 'Lise', but also their parents—the elder Aehles and Mana's mother, who came from France to join them.

"We lived here happily for almost fifteen years," she reminisced. "Mana was wonderful. No matter how ill she was, she was always cheerful. She kept all our spirits up. She was still on her feet when she came here, but it wasn't long before she had to take to a wheelchair."

Even in a wheelchair, Mana Houskova Aehle continued to teach dancing. "It helps my

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